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Role play is discussed as an aid to the implementation of New Careers programs in human service agencies. Goals of the New Careers programs include: (a) expansion of health, education, and welfare institutions, (b) meaningful jobs for the underemployed, (c) advancement opportunities for all human service agency employees through in-service training, and (d) development of new skilled and professional manpower. Role play is defined in context, and its functions discussed. Consideration is given to (a) the protected environment of role play, (b) role play as an aid to group process and increased self-knowledge, (c) implications for learning new ideas, teaching new communications, and leadership skills, (d) dealing with ambiguity, and (e) modification of behavior through role playing. A second section is a manual on how to conduct role playing sessions. It discusses the role of the trainer, techniques and methods for stimulating interest, and incidental learnings in the process. (BP)

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ROLE PLAY IN NEW CAREERS TRAINING

A Technique for Developing Paraprofessional-Professional Teamwork in Human Service Agencies

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School of Education
New York University

1968

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INTRODUCTION

Role play is discussed here as an aid to the implementation of New Careers programs in human service agencies. The techniques described are based on methods developed by the New Careers Training Laboratory (NCTL),[1] and may be used in conjuction with "Simulation I: Store Front Staff Meeting," which is a video-tape produced by NCTL demonstrating the use of role play as a problem-solving technique.*

The goals of the New Careers concept include:

Expansion and improvement of the services offered by the helping institutions in the fields of health, education, and social welfare.

Meaningful productive jobs for the underemployed -- recruitment of personnel from the disadvantaged communities.

Promotional and career opportunities for all employees in the human service agencies via a structured program of advancement and the sharing of responsibilities among professionals and paraprofessionals with advanced training and education available on-the-job.

Development of new sources of skilled and professional manpower as the paraprofessional workers acquire training and education.

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1. The New Careers Training Laboratory is funded by the United States Office of Economic Opportunity to provide a training capability for the staffs of agencies employing nonprofessionals. Utilizing its Training of Trainers model, the Laboratory works specifically with those who will be training nonprofessionals.

* The video tape is available from NCTL. For information please contact NCTL Audio Visual Department, 184 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y.10010

SECTION I

FUNCTIONS OF ROLE PLAY

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FUNCTIONS OF ROLE PLAY

What is Role Play?

Role playing is a training technique in which the trainees act out or "do" the kinds of situations and problems they encounter in their day to day world of work. As few as two people can role play, but most role playing is usually done in groups where two or more persons do a situation while the other members of the group observe, then all discuss it.

Example:

Problem: How does an employment service aide help an applicant fill out a form?

Role play: One aide-trainee assumes his job role; another plays the part of the applicant. The group observes while the role players enact the situation.

After the role play the group discusses and develops alternatives for helping the trainee help the client more effectively.

In the discussion following the role playing, the observers can learn as much as the role players themselves.

The technique can be of special value for training persons to work in the field of human services -- in a social welfare agency, a school, a hospital, a mental health clinic, a Day Care center, a family planning agency, a law enforcement agency, etc. In such agencies both the professional and paraprofessional workers can learn through role play effective ways of dealing with the public and with each other, because it gives them the opportunity for real practice in the kinds of situations which they will encounter in their daily work experience.

At first, the roles selected and the situation which is being simulated should be simple enough to allow for easy involvement by the group. It is therefore very important that the situation be a common one, i.e., one that is "true" for everyone. In general the situation chosen should be short in duration. To use it most profitably, it is best if the trainer picks up from what the group focuses on. That is, something that seems to strike the group as important, even crucial, no matter how simple it may seem to be.

Examples: *Role play may help solve such common problems as:*

1. "How should a receptionist in an agency greet a new client?" One of the trainees assumes the role of the receptionist and another that of the client, and together they act out the situation in their own words and gestures.

2. "How should a supervisor explain and demonstrate the use of the time clock to the new worker?" One of the supervisor-trainees assumes the role of the supervisor and another, that of the new employee, and again the situation is acted out.

After the incident is played, the players and the observers discuss their reactions to the behavior demonstrated gaining new ideas as to how it may be modified. The situation can be then re-played in the light of the suggestions proposed. Thus, the second time around the "receptionist" may decide that the client would feel more welcome if the greeting were less casual. Or, the "supervisor" might discover that in his explanation of the time clock he took for granted that the new employee was familiar with the device, whereas this was not the case at all.

In the same way that a picture is said to be "worth a thousand words," even such simple exercises as the above can very quickly clarify issues that hours of lecturing and discussion might not bring out. In the examples given, role play

> Created situations familiar to all the participants: in every agency clients have to be greeted; in agencies using a time clock the correct procedure must be understood by all the employees.
>
> Provided a common concrete frame of reference for discussion by all the participants since all the members of the training group witnessed the same event.
>
> Actively illustrated an abstract concept of behavior: The lecture or discussion about greeting a client may have emphasized the need to be friendly, hospitable, courteous. The role play showed how friendliness and courtesy can be demonstrated. The lecture about explaining the use of the clock may have stressed the need for clarity. The role play demonstrated how clarity can be achieved.

THE PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT OF ROLE PLAY

Role playing takes place in a protected setting. That is, because it occurs in the training classroom, and because of its very nature of being a training exercise, the participants are free from the tensions and consequences which might result in the actual work situation. The role players can behave in ways which on the job might cause disapproval; during the discussion, the participants can express opinions which they might not feel free, nor perhaps have the opportunity, to state in the work context.

This protection greatly helps to ease the natural anxiety of persons who are working in a new situation such as exists when an agency is implementing a career development program. The professionals may never before have shared their responsibilities with paraprofessionals; the paraprofessionals may never before have had any but unskilled, unsteady jobs.

Role play can help the employees adjust to this newness; familiarize themselves with their new roles, examine difficulties, and probe solutions in a laboratory work-shop atmosphere. They can be free of the fear that the behavior they are testing will have unpleasant outcomes.

Example:

Among a group of trainees working as educational auxiliaries, some may feel that the teachers whom they assist limit them only to custodial duties, such as helping the children put on their coats, or checking the classroom supplies. They may want to discuss this question with the teachers, but are fearful of broaching the subject.

By playing out the situation before the group, they can hold a "pretend" meeting with the teachers. With some of the trainees assuming the part of the auxiliaries, and the others that of the teachers, various approaches can be tested, observed, and analyzed.

Or, the problem may be that although they are assuming non-assigned roles, the auxiliaries feel resentment and hostility on the part of the teachers. In the role play situation, with a trainee playing the teacher, and another an auxiliary, the behavior can again be acted and analyzed, and approaches developed for dealing with the teacher.

In the role play described above, if one of the auxiliaries is too blunt in talking to the "teacher," for example, the results are very different from what might occur in a real situation where provoking the teacher's anger might only increase the auxiliary's difficulties.

The protected environment of role play is equally effective for professionals who are participating in a training program.

Example:

A teacher discovers that his educational auxiliary has told Johnny's mother that the teacher feels Johnny is not working hard enough in school. This has angered the mother who interprets the statement to mean that the teacher has classified the boy as "lazy," and she has come to the school to upbraid the teacher. The teacher would like to know how to discuss the problem with the auxiliary without damaging the working relationship.

During the role play session, one teacher may assume his own role, and another that of the auxiliary, and various ways of handling the case may be tried and discussed.

Here, too, the teachers are protected from the results which mishandling of the situation might have in the real world.

ROLE PLAY AS AN AID TO GROUP PROCESS

Every trainer must face such questions as how to "break the ice" -- establish rapport among members of a new group, and between the group and himself; how to present material for lively, pertinent discussion; how to illustrate concepts; how to involve all the participants. The following case study demonstrates how role play is a versatile resource for the trainer in working with these problems:

At the beginning of the 1968-69 school year the New Careers Training Laboratory conducted an intensive two-day workshop for the trainers of educational auxiliaries in the New York City School System. Sixty persons attended. The group included training supervisors, training coordinators (most of whom were former teachers in the public schools), and auxiliary trainers (some of whom were nonprofessionals who had

worked as educational auxiliaries, and who had no previous experience as trainers). Many of the persons in the group were strangers to each other.

During the pre-workshop coffee-time and the first orientation hour it was evident to the NCTL staff that with little time left before the school term began, the natural anxiety which accompanies the prospect of starting on a new job was heightened for many of the trainees in this group by the fact that a new program of school decentralization would also be going into effect. They came to the workshop asking to be equipped "over night" with a large battery of group skills.

During the orientation period the NCTL trainers made a census of the problems which seemed most urgent to the trainees. A majority wanted to know "What to do on the first day of training."

The NCTL trainers decided to approach the problem by involving the entire group in a role play of "What NOT To Do On the First Day of Training." It was hoped that on seeing an example of poor training techniques, the trainees would be stimulated to discover many rights ways of going about conducting a session.

Two NCTL trainers assumed the roles of a training coordinator and his assistant. The group of trainees as a whole was asked to assume the roles of educational auxiliaries who, anxious and confused, would overwhelm the trainers with questions.

The NCTL trainers did an excellent job of impersonating extraordinarily incompetent, ill-prepared trainers. They slumped in their seats, mumbled their names when they introduced themselves, did not identify their

positions nor the purpose of the meeting, they appeared to feel bored and superior. They did not welcome the "auxiliaries," but went directly into a brief and garbled explanation of how to fill out an employee identification form, merely holding the form up before the group, and pointing out "you sign your name here and here."

When the "educational auxiliaries" asked questions, the "trainers" shrugged off some, were evasive with others, and refused to answer still others. They ignored persons who asked for the floor, or gave unsatisfactory replies such as, "Well, that's not important" or "we'll get to that later." In general, the simulated training session became chaotic and frustrating for all the participants.

The discussion following this role play was lively and good humored, and the feeling tone of the group was much different from what it had been when the workshop

began, only two hours previously. The poor performance of the "trainers" and the fun of playing the part of educational auxilies and confusing the "trainers" with outlandish questions caused much laughter and created a feeling of camaraderie and relaxation.

The trainees were also able to feel more secure about how they would perform when they actually conducted their own first day of training -- surely nothing they would ever do could possibly be as dreadful as what they had seen! As the trainees suggested ways in which the trainers could have handled the session better, they discovered that they had learned much about appropriate methods for conducting a group meeting. Such learnings included:

- The need to establish a feeling of warmth and acceptance for all members by a friendly, interested attitude on the part of the trainers;

- The need to provide a sense of purpose, structure and direction by stating the objectives of the meeting and the topics that would be covered.

- The necessity for careful preparation so that they can answer questions clearly and give the educational auxiliaries practical information about their duties, where to collect paychecks, regulations on attendance, fringe benefits, sick leave, etc.

- The need for order and fairness, giving everyone a chance to speak, taking a census of problems.

Incidentally, they also learned that role play can be used immediately to reduce tension, because it is enjoyable, involves everyone, and is easy to do.

Immediately after this demonstration and discussion, two of the trainees from the Board of Education volunteered to show how an orientation session should be handled, and displaying great serenity, dignity, interest and courtesy, guided the group to a useful discussion of their problems.

The remainder of the two-day workshop was also based on role-play. Now comfortable with each other, the trainees were able to break up into smaller groups where they enacted and explored such complex questions as a confrontation between a group of teachers and a training

team over the problem of utilizing the skills of the educational auxiliary; a joint meeting of teachers and educational auxiliaries led by a training team to discuss the teachers' fear that because of the auxiliary's identification with the community they were in effect "spies" for the community

Role play not only placed them in a simulated work situation but also helped the trainees to assume the viewpoints of the persons with whom they would be working -- teachers, educational auxiliaries and supervisors. They also were able to practice techniques for guiding a group, and to understand better the need for objectivity on the part of the group leader, as well as for structure and a sense of conclusion or closure.

This is the essense of what is meant when we say that role play is <u>permissive</u>. The role is played in an atmosphere that is non-threatening. Mistakes can be made, discussed and corrected without there being any fear that an error is irreversible. To this degree it

is a technique which permits the player to try out in a protected setting what he might otherwise fear to do. It supports him in an attempt to try alternatives that might not be undertaken in the work situation; it increases his options for behavior. Activities and behavior which have proven difficult can be anticipated, exposed, then analyzed.

Equally, the behavior of others can be observed and assessed. In doing this assessment the group members may suggest alternative ways of behaving, thus increasing the role players' and their own repertoire of skills for dealing with human relations problems, confronting situations.

ROLE PLAY AS AN AID TO INCREASED SELF-KNOWLEDGE

A basic principle of the career development approach to employment is that paraprofessionals and professionals within an agency work together as a team, all contributing their special knowledge, skills and experience for enriching the services the community receives. In this way, for instance, the Family Planning Aide helps the professional explain to a group of house-wives in their own terms, the benefits of birth control.

Such cooperation is based on mutual acceptance among the team members, and implies that they support and learn from each other. This desired interaction does not always result solely from daily contact among the workers. For those who have never before related as colleagues to persons from another background, the new relationship may create uncertainties, anxieties, and conflict. A lawyer in a Legal Aide agency may never before have collaborated on a case with a person who does

not have a university degree. A psychotherapist may never before had to rely on the assistance of a Mental Health aide who belongs to a different race and who has not finished high school.

Positive behavor is essential if the professional-nonprofessional teams are to function well. However, neither may be aware that behavior which he takes for granted is not easily understood by others with different behavioral patterns. It may be, for example, that a person does not realize that he does not act "natural" when he meets on equal grounds someone whom he perceives as "different." Or, if he is aware of his lack of ease, he may never have explored that reasons for it.

Examples:

The manager of an urban relocation office may be mystified by the fact that although he makes a point of being "nice" to the relocation aide, the latter may show uncooperativeness through such actions as habitual tardiness, or failure to turn in reports.

The aide may not understand why when he

"only wants to help" he has difficulty in getting the professional to let him go out on home visits.

The root of these troubles may be that neither feels comfortable in freely talking and communicating with the other.

Such hidden attitudes may get in the way of the agency team's effectiveness. It may be necessary to bring them out into the open: to create the opportunity for increased self-knowledge as a pathway for greater sensitivity to how others react.

Thus, an agency's training program must provide some help for confronting these kinds of problems. It usually must involve an effort to bridge the differences in attitudes and behavior of the professional and paraprofessional staff members, to establish a current of mutual awareness, cross-learning and exchange.

Role play can be a useful vehicle for helping professionals and paraprofessionals to learn more about themselves and each other. The "let's pretend" freedom of

role play permits the participants to become involved and confront themselves in settings which in real life might prove uncomfortable, as when a supervisor has to tell an auxiliary that confidential information in the case-work files is not a subject for neighborhood gossip. In the discussion-analysis following the role play the players obtain immediate feedback as to how their behavior appears to others, with an opportunity for objectively exploring the effect of, and reasons for, their actions.

The techniques of Role Reversal (the role players switch roles) and Mirror Role Play (a member of a group imitates the behavior of another in a given situation)[1] can strengthen the participants' self-awareness and sensitivity to others, giving them an opportunity to react to themselves as others do, and to gain deeper insights into the behavior of others.

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1. See Section II, Description of Techniques, p. 42 & 44

E *Examples:*

1. *The relocation agency manager assumes the role of the aide, and discovers the humiliation of being talked down to.*

2. *The case worker who may never have experienced poverty takes on the role of an unemployed parent with many mouths to feed, and comes to understand the parent's anxiety when faced with the formality and red tape of applying for welfare assistance.*

3. *The aide, by assuming the role of the manager or by watching another player "mirror" his actions, learns that saying "Hey, who do you think you are around here?" is not exactly the best way to start a discussion of his grievance.*

4. *The attendance counsellor auxiliary who cannot get Johnny's father to discuss the reasons for the boy's absence from school, finds by assuming the father's role that it is not easy for a man to say he cannot afford to buy shoes for his son, especially if he is questioned in an accusatory manner.*

By playing the opposite role, or seeing his actions imitated as in the examples above, the professional may learn about himself that he in fact resists accepting the paraprofessional as a colleague, although in theory he is committed to the principle of equality; or that he wants

results too quickly. Or, in the second incident, that in his desire to "get the facts" as efficiently as possible, he does not show the compassion he may feel.

The paraprofessional may learn that he is hostile toward the professional, or that he is punitive and rejecting of the poor who have not found the opportunity he has for meaningful employment. As each played the reverse role, he identified with the situation, his emotions became engaged, and he saw himself reacting in a manner that may have surprised him.

Such "moments of truth" may lay the basis for further analysis and understanding of the reasons for the behavior shown which in turn eventually may lead to the desired change.

It is beneficial for professionals and paraprofessionals to have joint role play and discussion sessions. However, it may be advisable to sometimes postpone such joint sessions until each group has had the opportunity

for exploring problem areas among themselves. Otherwise, tensions may be too great, and prevent the achievement of the desired exchange and understanding.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING

The work-training program of a human service agency oriented toward developing the potential of all its personnel, aims at rapidly improving its services to the community. The employee-trainees are thus required to learn quickly many human relations skills, and to apply what they learn in the training sessions to the real world of work in a continuous flow. The nature of such training programs and the demands of the trainees' jobs and personal lives necessitate that the skills taught them be relevant, practical and efficient.

Learning takes place more promptly, is more effective and long lasting when the student is interested and involved, and when the knowledge that he has acquired is reinforced in a stimulating and relevant manner. Role play is a dynamic means for providing these ingredients for successful learning of human relations skills.

INTEREST is stimulated because the role play deals with problems which the trainees encounter daily: E.G. an educational auxiliary acts out the problem of how to control a child's tantrum. A mental health aide acts out the problem of encouraging a patient to comb her hair.

INVOLVEMENT is direct because all members of the group participate both as players and observers in the enactment of situations common to all of them.

REINFORCEMENT, while continuous and repeated, is varied and stimulating since solutions to similar problems can be drawn from many different experiences, demonstrated by many different styles with a varied cast of role players, approached from several viewpoints -- the teacher's, the auxiliary's, the supervisor's, the agency client's,etc. The reinforcement is further strengthened by the discussion following each role play as the trainer

encourages free exchange of feelings and opinions.

Role play can serve the trainees in a variety of ways for:

1. Introducing New Ideas

The hiring of paraprofessionals may permit an agency to work more dynamically in the community. By utilizing the neighborhood know-how of its indigenous staff, a Family Planning agency may be able to present its services more efficiently to the local residents.

Role play exercises, such as having the family planning aide trainees assume the roles of an aide and a housewife during a home visit, can graphically teach the trainees many aspects of the effects of family planning on the lives of the clients. Also they can learn through role play how to gain entry for a house call; how to conduct a group meeting of neighborhood wives to explain the agency's services; how to interest a client's husband in the program;

how to spot problems, other than family planning, that may be troubling a client.

2. Teaching New Communications Skills

a. Verbal Skills

Despite their eagerness to work with people, many trainees (both professional and paraprofessional) lack the skills for effective communication. The professional may use professional jargon, or be self-conscious and stiff; the paraprofessional may be too direct or too intimate. Role play gives the trainees concrete experience in developing approaches for reaching out to others.

It appears that a lecture or a question and answer session alone are not sufficient stimuli to encourage verbal performance. People tend to express themselves more readily when reacting to things they can see and do. This is especially true for persons who are not accustomed to the traditional classroom

method of instruction. The participants in the role play exercise gain practice in speaking, listening, and detecting what lies behind what is being said. They may learn, for example, that certain habits of speech, or the use of pet expressions often have an effect beyond that anticipated. This feedback is provided to the participants in the discussion period following the role play.

Example:

One trainee who habitually used the phrase, "Do you understand?" learned that some persons took this as a questioning of their intelligence rather than as a desire on the part of the trainee to know whether he was explaining himself well. It was suggested that instead he ask, "Do I make myself clear?" Another trainee found that some persons object to the terms "Baby," "Honey,"

"Sweetheart" as inappropriate for addressing strangers in the work situation, as when answering the telephone, or greeting a client.

The observers of a role play, as well as the "actors," can improve their own communications skills as they contribute their comments. They can learn the value of brevity, of sticking to the point, of clarity, of listening, of "reading between the lines."

b. Non-Verbal Skills

Not only does role play teach verbal skills, the kinds of phrases that can make a client feel comfortable, for instance; it demonstrates too that communication involves not only words, but also gestures and expression.

Example:

In the role play situation, the trainee may use a gracious phrase but pull away nervously from the "client's" touch,

which can be interpreted as disdain; or he may ask a question in a friendly interested manner, but doodle as the answer is given, which may be taken to mean that he is not really interested in what the "client" has to say.

4. Expansion of the Trainer's Repertoire

For the trainer, the role play session can provide a profitable learning experience in the area of communications. He too obtains immediate feedback as to whether he is communicating well with the group, whether he is making his points clearly.

The discussion period may also provide him with material for further discussion and exploration by the group.

Example:

In role playing a visit by an educational auxiliary to Johnny's home, the "mother" may say that Johnny is tired because the baby cries all night and keeps him awake.

The trainer might use this situation for a discussion of how an auxiliary can be alerted to signs of problems in a child's family, and this in turn lead to exploration by the group of community resources to which parents can be referred for help on health and other problems.

4. Developing Leadership Skills

Implicit in a career development program is training for leadership. The paraprofessional trainees are encouraged to identify and utilize themselves as a group which can exert pressure within the agency and the community for improved services, for real career advancement opportunities for all workers, for education that is more truly job-relevant, for closer participation by the community in agency activities, for enlisting the support of professionals.

Role play can be used as an instrument to teach trainees techniques of leadership; to feel

comfortable in group interaction, to analyze a problem and present it clearly to the group, to handle hostility, to represent a group viewpoint, to bring two divergent viewpoints closer to each other. Throughout the training sessions each trainee may have many opportunities to play a variety of group leader roles.

Examples:

> *A panel discussion may be simulated, with one trainee acting as the leader, while other members of the group pretend to be the panel participants talking about ways of setting up a neighborhood consumers' cooperative.*
>
> *Or, a tenants' organization meeting may be simulated by the total training group, with the trainer acting as the moderator, while some of the members act disruptively, voicing anger, asking difficult questions, making irrelevant comments, demanding immediate action, etc.*

5. Dealing with Ambiguity

All situations involving inter-personal relations

contain a broad area of ambiguity.

Agencies which are in the process of implementing a career development program operate within such ambiguity. Standard procedures are being changed, many problems are unsolved and may continue to be for a long time ahead. Such questions may include the delineation of duties for the new paraprofessional staff, their relationships with the professionals, changes in the professionals' responsibilities, and other areas of human interaction which imply readjustment and a certain amount of discomfort.

Role play can be an effective instrument for helping the staff deal with these new situations as problems are acted out, analyzed and re-oriented in the light of the insights attained.

Example:

An ambiguous definition of authority often

can produce conflict.

An educational auxiliary reported to her training group that the teacher whom she assisted had frequently countermanded the auxiliary's orders to the children. The group saw the need for a discussion of the question of authority between the auxiliary and the teacher, and the discussion was role played with the auxiliary doing her own role and another auxiliary that of the teacher. Of the several approaches tried, the most fruitful one was found to be that in which the auxiliary related the problem to a specific situation and offered her help in a friendly manner, such as:

"Mrs. Jones, since we're taking the children on a field trip next Tuesday, would you please go over the safety rules with me so that I may know exactly how I am to help the children observe them? Should I allow the children to kneel on their seats when the bus is in motion?"

Separately, in a training session with the teachers, the training team brought out the question of authority as a general problem, and the group expressed a need for a definition of authority for the teachers and the auxiliaries. Again a discussion was simulated with a teacher playing her own role, and another that of an educational auxiliary.

MODIFYING BEHAVIOR

Role playing can produce behavioral changes by placing persons in specific roles. It becomes apparent that a person's behavior is not only a function of his personality, but also of the situation and role in which he finds himself. Role playing becomes a good device for resolving problems arising out of distortion in communication and perception.

Example:

The situation of an aide who has limited interactions with supervisory agency line staff and who views them as unfriendly. Role playing can be used to illustrate, explain, and discuss the factors that lead to this "distance" between agency and workers.

In the same way, professionals who feel that the paraprofessionals hold themselves distant may role play different situations to explore possible sources for this feeling.

SECTION II

HOW TO CONDUCT ROLE PLAY SESSIONS

The Role of the Trainer

SECTION II

HOW TO CONDUCT ROLE PLAY SESSIONS

The Role of the Trainer

Role playing requires some structuring and some management. However, the Trainer should be primarily concerned with the aim of the role play. It is important that the Trainer clearly determine what it is he wants to accomplish during the role play session. When the training goal has been established, then follow the general guidelines set forth below:

1. ESTABLISH an atmosphere of ease and permissiveness among the group. This can be facilitated by engaging in light conversation with the group beforehand, or by discussing resolved issues which occurred during the recent past. Initially, role playing may be introduced to the group without any identifying labels. For example, during a problem discussion the

Trainer may casually ask a group member to "pretend that you're that person -- what would you say in that situation?"

2. Get the group to IDENTIFY and DEFINE the problem situation carefully and clearly. Begin with simple problems that are of common interest to the group The Trainer assists the group by making the problem specific. If the group indicates they want to discuss a "teacher-aide problem" the Trainer ask, "What kind of problem? Is the aide in an elementary school or junior high school, what is the supervisory teacher like?" The Trainer may begin to discover the things that interest and trouble various people within the group.

3. CHOOSE the persons to participate in the role play exercise and clearly define their

roles. It is sometimes good not to choose the first person who volunteers to participate during the initial role-play exercises. This person may be the group member who is adept verbally and particularly behaviorally. Thus, he may be capable of putting on convincing "acts" to gain attention or steer the course of the group. Also it is equally unwise to insist on participation initially from group members who are highly resistant. Encourage an easy, slow, informal atmosphere. The main goal is to get people involved in the role playing.

4. ASSIGN a <u>concrete</u> task to the observers. For example, the observers may be asked to note gestures and other physical movements that reveal what the players are feeling.

5. BEGIN actual role playing. Role playing requires the participants to act as though they were involved in a real life situation. Role playing differs from ordinary drama in that the participants are not required to memorize lines or to adhere to prepared scripts. Instead, they act out parts as though they were the real persons involved. The words and actions are provided by the role players according to their own interpretations of what they <u>should be</u>.

6. STOP the role playing when the appropriate point has been made or demonstrated. Role playing should be used sparingly. In role playing, once the drama begins, the Trainer must be especially alert to natural "breaks" occurring during the role play. A role play exercise that is allowed to drag out

to the point of inanity or ridiculousness becomes a futile exercise which may even be boring to the participants and observers. If the Trainer feels that the players are not clear in their understanding of the described situation, and appear to be fumbling, he should then stop the role play and discuss with the group the reasons for the miscommunication.

7. GUIDE the group discussion and evaluation after the session is finished. For example, if the session was intended to teach a skill, then the group may discuss the skill and evaluate its effectiveness. A careful analysis of actions and emotions should follow the role play exercise. The results may give insights not easily available in any other way.

The Trainer should avoid falling into the trap of "moralizing." Perhaps one of the most common abuses of the role playing method is the tendency by some Trainers to use role playing feedback as a method to inform individual trainees about what is wrong with their current behavior. Trainers often have been observed to make such remarks as the following:

"You seem to be very hostile."

"You are not a very sympathetic person."

There is substantial evidence which indicates that <u>criticism</u> of performance is an <u>ineffective</u> method of achieving attitude and behavior change. The Trainer should keep the post-role discussion focused on <u>feelings</u>, <u>interpretations</u>, <u>alternative behaviors</u>, and <u>alternative solutions</u>.

There are some routine skills which can also utilize role playing exercises for demonstration and drill. Such skills might include completion of agency forms, or answering the telephone properly. The role play practice follows the demonstration of the skill.

DESCRIPTIONS OF TECHNIQUES

In role play a situation is defined and players are assigned roles. The players are instructed to play the role as they think or feel the real life person would react or respond in the same situation. The various techniques which may be utilized in role plays are:

ROLE REVERSAL -- The two players switch roles -- i.e., getting into the other fellow's shoes. This technique allows the players to gain different perspectives and insight into the other person's behavior. For example a supervisor/worker conflict might be examined and discussed. The Trainer would switch the working roles; thus, the supervisor would assume the role of the worker and vice-versa. The two players would act-out the behavior and feelings of the other person based on their interpretations.

PROJECTION -- The person plays the situation as he would <u>ideally</u> like it to be. This technique differs from the description given above in that the player is encouraged to project in the role the responses and reactions that he feels are ideal. For example, in training urban aides to gather census data from community residents a role play situation might be developed in which one player is instructed to play himself, an urban aide, greeting and requesting information from a resident as he feels it should ideally be done. In the discussion that follows, the group members comment on their perception of the role which may vary from the depicted role. A trainee who has criticisms of the greeting demonstrated may be requested to act out his conception of the ideal role performance.

MIRROR ROLE PLAY -- Another person plays the same role, but exaggerating the main difficulty or weakness of the first role player, clarifying the errors being made. For example, in the conflict situation between supervisor and worker the supervisor may feel that the worker is deliberately resisting him in the role play situation by not "hearing" his explanation. The Trainer asks another group member to mirror role play the behavior of the Community Worker. This technique allows the first player to observe his behavior as perceived by others.

Other kinds of training may occur during the role play exercise. For example, the group members may learn to use more effectively non-verbal forms of communication to express feelings where words are limited. Also, the group helps the individual to evaluate the strong and weak points in his style to allow him to realize his full potential.

To facilitate this, the Trainer should focus some post role play discussion on form as well as content.

In addition, observational and perceptual skills are increased as the group members carry out assignments involving observation, such as reporting what they have seen and inferred from the role play exercise.

STIMULATING INTEREST

In introducing role playing to a new group it is sometimes helpful to warm the group up by employing the following techniques which tend to dispel the sense of uneasiness and hesitancy among the group members.

Multiple Role Playing

In getting started, multiple role playing may be used. In this process the entire group forms into role playing groups. Two people role playing in each group is preferred; however, the number of characters required for a particular situation determines the number of players. All groups role play simultaneously. Afterwards, each group discusses and evaluates its results. This method quickly dispels shyness and feelings of self-consciousness.

Trainer Participation

During the initial stage the distance between the Trainer and the group members is reduced when the Trainer participates as a role play group member. When the Trainer

participates in the role playing, someone else should direct the session temporarily. The Trainer is cautioned not to do too much role playing with the group. He should be free, most of the time, to monitor, observe and evaluate the role play exercises.

Task Assignment

The observers become directly involved in the role play if they are assigned specific tasks. One may be asked to listen for significant remarks. Another may be asked to note gestures that reveal feelings. The group may be asked to list all statements that seem to mask what the characters really think. Of course, the observers always have the assigned tasks of listening, observing, and evaluating.

Buzz Groups

For a large audience buzz groups provide an opportunity for all the observers to participate in the dis-

cussion and evaluation after role playing is finished. Buzz groups are formed when the large group is divided into smaller groups of four or six. Each of these groups is guided by an assigned "leader" who leads the post role play discussion around a task assigned by the Trainer, and makes a verbal report to the re-assembled large group.

INCIDENTAL LEARNINGS

Many incidental learnings occur during role play through "playing," "observing," and "discussing."

Because of the loose structure of a role play session, the Trainer cannot map out exactly the learning that will be accomplished. The insights that will develop from a role play cannot be entirely forecast, since there is no way of knowing beforehand what behavior and emotion will result, and as in any learning experience each member of the group will learn different things in accordance to his own reactions and frames of reference.

It is generally agreed, however, that certain identifiable learnings do occur in role playing. They are:

- role playing increases a person's repertoire and potential by helping him to explore his skills and possible ways of dealing with problems and doing things.

- the emotional dimension in role playing leads to more meaningful insight and better carrying through of changes in behavior.
- role playing increases verbal skills where these skills are limited.
- participants learn how to move and become more physical and do not merely sit and talk.
- role playing facilitates seeing a problem from various perspectives by placing the participants temporarily on someone else's shoes.

The learnings may not be immediately apparent to the Trainer but may show themselves in changed attitudes toward work or new ways of dealing with people in a situation other than the training situation.